WRITE *Poetry* NOW

366 PROMPTS *for* POETS

Robert Lee Brewer

For years now, I've been sharing poetry prompts online at my Poetic Asides blog on the WritersDigest.com website. In fact, an entire community has formed around the common goal of creating new poems. In April and November, I host a poem-a-day challenge; the rest of the year, I share poetry prompts on Wednesdays. This book collects hundreds of my Poetic Asides poetry prompts, and it also contains quite a few new prompts.

Most of these prompts are good enough that a poet could write a series of poems off them. As a result, this book may contain 366 prompts, but it can produce thousands of poems.

Good luck, have fun, and be sure to visit the Poetic Asides blog at WritersDigest.com.

Write an “against all odds” poem. There are so many other scenarios that involve someone or something working against all odds to make something happen. Think of one such situation and write it!5

Write an evening poem. The poem could be about the evening in the city or the country; in winter or summer; outdoors or indoors.

Write an explosion poem.

Take the phrase “(blank) Story;” replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new word or phrase the title of your poem; and then, write the poem. Example titles include: “East Side Story,” “Toy Store Story,” and “Eventually Has an End Story.” Or something else. Have fun poeming your story.

Write a sonnet. Sonnets are 14-line poems that have a variety of rhyme schemes, though they usually consist of 10-syllable lines.

Write a tribute poem. Tribute can be to a person, an animal, a plant, an electrical gadget, or whatever.

Write a holiday poem.

Write a good old days poem. Sometimes the good old days were actually good, but they can also be kind of bad. Everyone has a good old days poem in them (even if it’s someone else’s good old days story). So dig deep and pull it out.

Write a secret agent poem. If you need additional inspiration, break out the 007 films.

Write a consumption poem. There are any number of things we consume as people, and even more if you think outside the human experience. Some are good, some not so much. But there’s so much consumption going on every single day that it’s a great topic for

poeming.

Write a gathering poem. The gathering could be a family gathering, but also about any other gathering—whether human or not. Yes, that really opens things up, doesn't it? Also, remember that sometimes the more interesting things at gatherings happen on the periphery.

Write a poem involving shapes.

Write a looking back poem. This poem could be about physically looking back, or it could be about looking back over your past.

Write a travel poem. Come at traveling from any angle you wish, and remember that there are any number of ways to travel, including on foot, by vehicle, etc.

Pick a fruit; make the fruit the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write a lune. The lune is 3-line poem invented by the poet Robert Kelly to make a sort of American haiku. It has a 5-syllable first line, 3-syllable second line, and 5-syllable final line.

Take the phrase "Whenever (blank);" replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write your poem. Example titles could be: "Whenever I write a poem," "Whenever something good happens," "Whenever never," etc.

Write a best ever poem. Now, don't stress out. I don't expect you to write the best poem ever written. However, you're allowed to aim for that if you wish. No, I'm asking you to write a poem about the best ever something. For instance, the best ever kiss, best ever dance, best ever party, best ever comeback, best ever moment, etc. Think about your personal "bests" and then write one (or three).

Write a "suspicious minds" poem. That is, write a poem in which the narrator is either suspicious of someone or is the actual one under

suspicion.

Write an “it’s too late” poem. Nobody likes a quitter, but sometimes you have to “know when to hold them, know when to fold them…” There are times when it’s just too late.

Write a poem that reveals something. Maybe it’s something physical (like light revealing an intruder or pulling back a sheet to reveal a new car). Or maybe it’s something psychological, emotional, or spiritual.

Take the phrase “Once Upon a (Blank),” replace the blank with a word or phrase, make the new phrase the title of your poem, and then, write your poem. Example titles could include: “Once Upon a Time,” “Once Upon a Moon,” or “Once Upon a Stage Accepting the Nobel Prize in Literature.” Hey, a poet can dream, right?

Write a love poem. There is romantic love, but there’s also the love for family, divine love, friendly love, etc. Don’t limit yourself to “roses are red and violets are blue…”

Write an anti-love poem. If you’ve had it with love (or love poems), this is the prompt for you. Let it rip.

Write a hay(na)ku. The hay(na)ku is a tercet (3-line poem) that consists of one word in the first line, two words in the second line, and three words in the final line.

Write a deadly and dangerous poem. Or you could write just a deadly poem. Or you could write a just dangerous poem. Feel free to poem on the wild side!

Write a kind poem. My interpretation of this prompt is that the poem should either be kind or somehow involve kindness in it. The poem could also involve cruelty, as long as there is some form of kindness somewhere.

Write an excess poem. In today’s culture, there seems to be an excess of excess. From an excess of advertisements and political posturing

to an excess of electronic gadgets and debt, there's an excessive number of ways to attack this prompt.

Write a waiting poem. Maybe the poem takes place in a waiting room, or the narrator is waiting for someone (or something) to arrive. Or maybe the poet is waiting for the lines to come.

Write a different perspective poem. There are a few ways a poet can tackle this one. First, write a poem from a different physical perspective–like from the top of a building or at the bottom of a hole or in the trunk of a car. Another possibility is to write from a different person's (or animal's or object's) perspective. If you have an even different perspective on this than me, roll with it.

Take the phrase "(blank) or (blank)," replace the blanks with a word or phrase, make the new phrase the title of your poem, and then, write your poem. Example titles could be: "This or that," "Dogs or cats," "Go my way or the highway," "To poem or not to poem," etc.

Write a paranormal poem. The paranormal includes ghosts, aliens, and other not easily explained phenomena.

Write a sestina. The sestina is a 39-line poem that consists of six 6-line stanzas and one 3-line stanza. Each line of each stanza uses a rotating end word that follows this pattern: ABCDEF; FAEBDC; CFDABE; ECBFAD; DEACFB; BDFECA; (AB)(CD)(EF). The final three lines use two end words per line in whichever order makes the most sense.

Write a normal poem. I know, what's a normal poem? Actually, I don't know. Work that out in your poem. One way to attack this prompt is to write about something a completely normal subject—maybe one not usually tackled in poems.

Write a "what won't wait" poem. Only you know what won't wait. Maybe it's falling in love or work–or death (one of my favorite Emily Dickinson poems is about this topic).

Write an addict poem. There are lots of possible addictions out there–some of them serious and some of them not so much. For instance, there are times when I think I'm addicted to work and pop ("pop" is what we call soda or cola in Ohio, where I was raised). Anyway, this prompt may range from the serious to the completely silly.

Write a broken poem. The poem can be specifically about something breaking or just include something (or someone for that matter) that's broken. Get as creative as you want about interpreting what's broken: cars, hearts, toys, spirits, codes, etc. Heck, I guess–unless you're writing prose poems–you'll automatically be breaking lines.

Write a poem about finding something unexpected. Maybe it's a note from a friend or a bag filled with money (or guns). Maybe it's finding a lover with someone who's not you. Or finding a secluded place to sit in the middle of the forest and think.

Write a rispetto poem. Poetic form consisting of two quatrains that usually follows this rhyme scheme: abab/ccdd.

Write a poem with the words: astronaut, beggar, guitar, and granola.

Take the phrase "Sort of (blank);" replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write the poem. Example titles could be: "Sort of cool," "Sort of strange," "Sort of not into getting out of bed in the morning," or whatever!

Use an epigraph to kickstart your poem. That is, use a quotation. To format an epigraph poem, a poet places the quotation between the title and the body of the poem, while also giving credit to the source of the quotation.

Write an "I'll get to it tomorrow" poem. There are some things we actually will get to tomorrow, but then again, there are some we realize will always be pushed back a day.

Write an "I'll get to it today" poem. Why wait? Achieve something today. This poem could even be about writing a poem today.

Write a lessons learned poem. This poem might take a moment to step back and reflect on the BIG PICTURE. Or this poem might be about real lessons learned (either recently or during your entire lifetime). Or you might just write a poem about going to school. Or to work. Or something else.

Write a poem in which the lesson is not learned. Some folks never learn, do they? This poem can be written in first or third person.

Write a next steps poem. This might be a good opportunity to try writing a poem about your goals today. Or it might be a good time to write about your future plans. It might even be a good chance for you to write about spiral staircases. Only you know.

Write a "what really happened" poem. Use a real event (or an event from a popular movie) and spin it in another direction. Or use an event described in one of your other poems and spin it in a new direction. Or refute something that was never even in question.

Write a shadorma. The shadorma is a 6-line poem that uses the following number of syllables per line: 3/5/3/3/7/5. After writing a few, you'll likely be hooked.

Take the phrase "Blame the (blank);" replace the blank with a word or phrase; use the new phrase as the title of your poem; and then, write the poem. Some example titles might include: "Blame the rain," "Blame the loud-mouthed jerk in the row behind us," "Blame the ref," etc.

Write an "on the run" poem. You can decide who or what is on the run and what might be causing them to run.

Write an animal poem. Your poem can mention an animal in its title or somewhere in the body of the poem. The animal doesn't have to be the main focus of the poem, but your poem should mention an animal somewhere in it.

Write a spaces poem. Your poem could involve white space, outer space, inner space, a parking space, the space between one day and the next, or something other type of spacing. Allow yourself enough space to play around.

Write a poem that takes a stand. This could be a political stand, religious stand, personal stand, or I guess a poem about the ability to stand–or setting up a stand (think vegetable stand or newspaper stand, etc.).

Write a permission poem. You don't need my (or anyone else's) permission to write your poem, but it should somehow involve the concept of giving, refusing, asking, etc. permission.

Write a "what's wrong or right" poem. As with any of these prompts, there are many ways to come at this one. However, I'm not going to get into the right or wrong ways to dig at this prompt.

Write a dirty poem.

Write a prose poem. A prose poem is basically a poem without line breaks. It still employs poetic devices such as metaphor and sound, but it looks like prose at first glance.

Write a poem with a hole in it. The hole could be referenced in the poem, which could be about subjects such as hitting a golf ball in the hole, punching a hole in the wall, or even visiting a hole in the wall bar. Another possibility is to write a poem with a hole in its logic, but I'm sure you can find any number of loop-holes for attacking this prompt.

Write a lost & found poem. I suppose you could focus on either what's lost or what's found–or both. Or you could focus on how things change after something is lost. Or after something is found.

Take the phrase "Tell me why (blank);" replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write the poem. Possible titles could include: "Tell me why $1+1=2$," "Tell me why I'm wrong," "Tell me why my hand always

gets stuck in the Pringle's container," etc. Get silly; get serious; get poeming!

Write a stacking poem. Stack lines on top of each other or images or metaphors or prompts.

Write an unstacking poem. Peel back the layers. Remove the stacked images. Dislodge the red tape.

Write a "just when you thought it was safe" poem. For instance, write a poem about the dangers of going off a diet just after hitting your goal weight, entering the water after it appears the killer shark has been caught (Jaws anyone?), or whatever else could offer a sneaky bit of danger.

Write a crossroads poem. This could be a poem about a physical, mental, or emotional intersection. For instance, graduating college or getting a divorce often leaves people at a crossroads. Or finishing a ginormous project at work. Or even starting a poem. After all, that blank page (or screen) offers so many new possibilities.

Make the title of your poem a question; then, the poem should go about trying to answer the question. You can be direct in your answer or a little vague. Possible titles might be: "Why is the sky blue?", "Where are my car keys?", or "How am I supposed to go about writing a poem that answers a question that also happens to be the title of the poem anyway?" I mean, any question will do to get you started, then the fun part is poeming an answer, which may or may not be direct.

Write a "forget what they say" poem. To do this, you could take a familiar saying and spin it on its head. Or comfort someone who's being told they can't do something. Or have the narrator of the poem pledge not to listen to the crowd. Or forget what I've said here, and do it your own way.

Write a spring poem. Flowers blooming, days getting longer, and birds in the trees.

Take the phrase “No One Wants (blank);” replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write the poem. Possible titles include: “No One Wants to Tell the Truth,” “No One Wants to Save Their Money,” “No One Wants to Write a Sestina,” etc.

Write a metamorphosis poem. This is an excellent opportunity to use metaphors and/or show changes in a season, person, animal, plant, or whatever.

Write a location poem. The poem can be about a location, but it doesn’t have to be. It could also just incorporate a location into the poem (like a love poem in Paris or something). This poem could also state your feelings about location in general.

Write a “ready to start” poem. There are so many ways to get started. Maybe you’re ready to dance, ready to play, ready to write a poem. Whatever the case, this is the poem to record it.

Write a pantoum. A Malay repeating form that consists of quatrains (4-line stanzas). These poems consists of at least two stanzas but can stretch as far as a poet wishes. The poem has repeating lines with the second and fourth line of one stanza being lines one and three in the next stanza. A common method of handling the final stanza is to make the first line of the first stanza the last and the third line of the first stanza the second line of that final stanza. This poem can rhyme or not rhyme.

Take one step back and write a “closing the door” or “turning the page” poem. Here’s how I interpret this prompt: a poem that looks at where a person (or animal or thing) was and finds resolution with the fact that things won’t be that way again.

Write a resolution (or lack of resolution) poem. Two ways to think of this prompt: One, a sort of New Year resolution poem; two, a poem that sort of ties things up or holds things together—like the resolution of a problem.

Write an outsider poem. That is, write a poem from the perspective of someone or something outside looking in. Or maybe someone on

the inside describes the outsider.

Write a top-of-the-world poem. This poem is either narrated by someone on top of the world or about someone that's on top of the world.

Write a climax poem. This is a poem that focuses on the big moment of something that's been set in motion. As the poet, you get to decide what that big moment is.

Write a call-to-action poem. Your call-to-action can be stated directly in the poem, or a more powerful way to attack this poem is to do it indirectly. Think of how The Jungle led to the establishment of the FDA and Bambi led to an interest in animal rights.

Write a something-overlooked poem. Think about something that is often overlooked and then shine some light on it.

Write a blues poem. Good blues songs have some repetition, some sad news, and some surprising twists.

Write a day-time poem. Happy or sad, this poem's only requirement is that it happens during the day.

Write a poem that I'm calling the "Been Everywhere" poem. If you're doing locations, it would be a poem that gives a shout out to all the places you've been. This can be made metaphorical, though.

Write a response poem. Find a poem that you really admire (or one with which you don't agree) and write a poem in response to it.

Write a serendipity poem.

Write a ghazal. A ghazal is a lyric poem of 5-15 couplets (2-line stanzas) that is usually a love poem and usually incorporates a word or few words into the refrain of the second line in each couplet.

Write a confessional poem. There are any numbers of things you can confess. Make up something if you don't have (or want to reveal)

any secrets.

Write a poem that shows the big picture. Instead of focusing on a frog jumping into a pond; write about a pond's entire ecosystem—as an example.

Write a political poem. Who says politics and poetry don't mix? For some poets, it's their bread and butter.

Take the phrase "If It (blank), It (blank);" replace the blanks with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write your poem. Example titles include "If It Runs, It Hides;" "If It Rains, It Pours;" and "If It Speaks, It Doesn't Think."

Write a nightmare poem today. You could write an actual nightmare, or present a nightmare scenario.

Write a warning poem. Offer some kind of caution or warning in your poem. Like, maybe, watch out for bad traffic or mixed metaphors or something.

Write a poem about dancing. It could be one person dancing alone in their room, a whole dance team, or a couple.

Write a poem that focuses on or discusses a tiny detail. It could be a tiny detail that is often overlooked, and you'd like to call attention to it. The detail could be one that if overlooked can cause good or bad things to happen.

Write a deep thought poem. Think about the big questions of the universe, whether serious or silly, and address them in your poem.

Write a "survival of the fittest" poem. Try to come up with a poem that plays around with the idea of the survival of the fittest. If you think about it long enough, you may be surprised what you discover.

Write a dream poem. This poem may be an actual dream, a fabricated dream, or just be dream-like.

Write a summer poem. Hot summer nights, beaches, sunshine, and air conditioning.

Write a fact poem. Research a fact (or facts) and create a poem. Or make up a fact. Or spin a myth into a fact. Or, well, you get the idea.

Write a myth poem. Investigate a well-known myth or make up a brand new myth. Be literal, or get surreal.

Write an observational poem. Most poems include observations, but for this poem, try to make the observation the poem.

Write a poem that sets a scene. In other words, one that pays attention to the details of the scenery and uses those details to heighten the effect and meaning of the poem.

Write a "soapbox" poem. Step on up and soapbox on politics, religion, the environment, college football's BCS system, poetry, etc.

Write a declaration poem. That is, write a poem that makes a statement about something in which you believe.

Write a poem that includes the words: bayonet, lateral, peanut, and murder.

Write a poem about dinosaurs.

Write a found poem. This is a poem that you find in something that was not intentionally a poem. For instance, a speech by someone could be turned into a poem. Or a short note. Or a message scrawled on the door of public restroom.

Write a hook poem. This is a poem intended to hook your reader from the very first line and keep driving to the end. Sure, most poets are trying to write poems that hook their readers from the beginning. For inspiration, look at Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" or Ginsberg's "Howl."

Write an “after leaving here” poem. This poem could be about leaving an actual place, a relationship, or a frame of mind. We leave many places and things every day without much ado, including rooms, vehicles, people (both those we know and complete strangers), etc. And to make this poem even more interesting is that there is presumably something that will be done after the leaving, whether that’s something fun, sad, hopeful, or whatever.

Write an ode. I’m thinking of odes in the more contemporary sense of being a praise poem, though if people want to get all old school with it, then that’s fine too.

Write a hot poem.

Write a “the world without something else” poem. Unlike writing a “the world without me” poem, this prompt imagines the world without something else, whether a person, place, thing, etc.

Take the phrase “In the (blank) of (blank);” replace the blanks with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write your poem. Some possible titles might include: “In the Heat of the Night;” “In the Heat of the Moment;” “In the Middle of a Heated Argument;” etc. Of course, you don’t have to use the word “heat” in your poem title.

Write a leader poem. This poem could be about a leader or tackle the ideas of leadership.

Write a follower poem. This poem could be about people who follow, could follow the lead of another poem, or could be about the idea of following people on social media sites.

Write a falling poem. This could be about the physical act of falling (like someone tying your shoelaces together), or it could be symbolic falling (such as falling in love).

Write a prayer poem. Your prayer poem could be religious, but it doesn’t have to be. People can pray to make it to work on time. Or

to be rich. Or even for the rain.

Write a quit doing what you're doing poem. This could be about something you need to quit doing or that someone or something else should quit doing.

Write an "only one in the world" poem. This only one in the world might be a person, an animal, a place, or an object. Think of someone or something unique and write.

Write a second thoughts poem. You could have second thoughts about something you've done or thought in the past. You could write about someone (or something) else having second thoughts. Or you could even take a poem you wrote earlier in and flip it in a new direction.

Write a message in a bottle poem. Imagine that your poem is being rolled up and put in a bottle for someone to read. Or if you want to come at it in a different way, think of it as a poem left in a time capsule or hidden away in your sock drawer.

Take the phrase "Like (blank);" replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title to your poem; and then, write your poem. Some example titles might be: "Like Superman," "Like Criminals," "Like a Poem," "Like Whatever," etc.

Write a poem that has the words: *banana, mascara, boomerang*, and *Boston*.

Write a snapshot poem. When I think of snapshot, I think of a photograph or painting still life. The poem would bring this particular moment to life. However, if you have another interpretation, I encourage you to follow your muse.

Write a profile poem. When I think of a profile poem, I'm thinking of social media profiles. Of course, there are other takes on the prompt, such as describing a physical profile, or a piece on criminal profiling, etc.

Write a triolet. This is an 8-line poem that consists of two refrains and an A-B rhyme scheme. Here's how the lines shake out: ABaAabAB. The capital A's and B's are the refrain lines.

Write an "ain't none of my business" poem. This poem could be about something that is none of your business. Or a poem about something with which no one else should be concerned. It could be a poem about someone ignoring something that maybe they shouldn't. It could be a poem that's silly. Or a poem that's serious. It ain't none of my business.

Write a poem that remembers an old relationship. This relationship does not have to be romantic. It could be a departed (or estranged) family member, old friend, former teacher, or even just someone you briefly encountered. And the relationship may have even been one-sided or seemingly insignificant to the other person.

Take the phrase "Maybe (blank);" replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write the poem. Some example titles might be: "Maybe I should've read the instructions first," "Maybe I was wrong," "Maybe the world is flat," or whatever else you can muster.

Write a never again poem. Maybe you'll never again fall in love or never again tell a lie. Or maybe, just maybe, you'll never again not write a poem. (Like that? It's a double negative.)

Write a time of day poem. In fact, make the title of your poem the time of day. For instance, "5:54 a.m.," 2:23 p.m.," "Midnight," etc. Then, write your poem. Of course, different things happen at different times of day. So have fun with it.

Write a ready to celebrate poem. You could chronicle the actual celebration or even write about the anticipation of one.

Write a "what if" poem. It could be a "what if" from the past, present or future. For instance, what if no one discovered electricity?

Take the phrase “Don’t (blank), (blank);” replace each of the blanks with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write the poem. Some possible titles might be: “Don’t walk, run,” “Don’t delay, act now,” “Don’t look, it’s right behind you,” or whatever other creative interpretation you can whip up.

Write a goofy poem. I’m not thinking of the Disney character, but it’d be fine to write about him too, I suppose.

Write a serious poem. There’s serious and then there’s serious. Try writing a seriously serious poem.

Pick a type of person and write a poem about him or her. To help set the scene, you may want to title your poem as who the type of person is. For instance, you could write a poem titled “Firefighter,” “Cynic,” “Optimist,” “Teacher,” “2-year-old,” etc. The list is endless.

Write a poem in which you imagine the world without you. The world could be a much worse place without you, could be pretty much the same, or I guess, it could even be better. Anyway, it’s interesting to contemplate our individual contributions to this planet in ways small and large.

Write a postcard poem. Make it brief and communicate what it is like where you are. Also, make it personal.

Write a “what got you here” poem. For instance, write a poem about a mode of transportation like your car, bike, horse, etc. Or write a poem about what “got you here” as a human being or writer (like what got you started writing, perhaps).

Write a letting go poem. The poem could be about letting go of a relationship; it could be about letting go of anger; it could be about letting go of a tree branch; or it could even be about, yes, letting go of a poem. There are so many things we can let go.

Take the phrase “And Suddenly (blank);” replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write the poem. Some examples: “And suddenly we were lost,”

“And suddenly over,” “And suddenly banana,” “And suddenly sudden,” “And suddenly the poem I was writing turned into a killer robot,” etc.

Write an end of the line poem. Maybe the narrator of your poem is at the end of his or her line. Other possible lines that have an end: assembly lines, phone lines, power lines, rail lines, graph lines, dotted lines, waiting lines, lines of poetry, etc.

Write a hopeful poem. The narrator of such a poem probably has quite a bit for which to live.

Write a rondeau. The rondeau is a 15-line, 3-stanza French poetic form. It follows this rhyme scheme: aabba/aabR/aabbaR. The R represents a refrain that consists of either the first word or first few words of the opening line.

Write a not ready poem, or even a never ready poem. This poem could be about not being ready for tax season, or never being ready for bad news.

Write a poem about entering something new. Every poem is a new experience, but this could about a new job, relationship, car, house, etc.

Look at something from a different angle. Then, write your poem.

Write a “more than 5 times” poem. Maybe you’ll write a poem about something the narrator does more times than preferable; maybe you’ll write a deja vu poem; or maybe you’ll just write the same line and/or stanza more than 5 times.

Write a positive poem. This poem will not take, “No,” for an answer.

Write a negative poem. This is the poem that has nothing nice to say about anyone or anything. This is the poem that realizes everyone and everything against him. This is the poem that doesn’t give a poop.

Write a disaster poem.

Take the phrase “Maybe (blank);” replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write a growth poem. There are so many types of growth: physical growth, mental growth, spiritual growth, emotional growth, facial hair growth, etc.

Write a poem inspired by a song. Feel free to quote a line of the song between the title and the body of the poem.

Write a poem with someone or something covered. This poem could talk about a physical covering, or it could be about someone who has a situation under control.

Pick a plant; make that the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Take the phrase “Should (blank);” replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write a slippery poem. Maybe the subject of the poem is slippery, like a wet floor or a bar of soap. Or maybe it’s about a person with a slippery nature.

Write a poem using the words: portal, tambourine, escalator, and catfish.

Write a construction poem. This poem could be about building something, watching construction workers, or playing with construction paper.

Take the phrase “If only (blank);” replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write a villanelle. The villanelle is an interesting 19-line Italian poetic form. It incorporates rhymes with refrains. Here is the pattern: aba/abR1/abR2/abR1/abR2/abR1/abR2/abR1R2. The R1's and R2's represent the refrains, which are actually the first and third lines of the opening stanza.

Write a renewable poem. Maybe this poem has to do with renewing library books or recharging batteries? Maybe it's about renewing your perspective on life?

Write a poem involving lines.

Write a hanging poem. Lots of things hang, including bats and holiday lights.

Take the phrase "Clouds (blank);" replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write an implosion poem.

Write a slow poem. It's one thing to write a fast poem, but it's something else to slow down and write a slow poem.

Write an attachment poem. This poem could look at e-mail attachments, human attachments, hair attachments, etc.

Write a poem filled with noise.

Take the phrase "And then (blank);" replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write a poem involving a real invention. The airplane. The bomb. Pizza!

Write a poem involving an imaginary invention. It's time to write about time travel machines and teleportation devices.

Write an emergency poem.

Pick a number; make that the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write a poem about something that will stick with you.

Write an exhausted poem. The poem can be a first person account of your own exhaustion, or it can describe the exhaustion of someone (or something) else. Heck, I guess it even could be about car exhaust, huh?

Write an earth poem.

Write a poem about somebody. It doesn't matter if the person is famous, infamous, or unknown to the masses. Make the title of the poem the person's name.

Write a science poem. Maybe write a poem about the scientific method or the LCD in Europe.

Write an acrostic. The most popular acrostics use the first letter of each line to spell out a name or message. Some more complicated acrostics will hide their messages within the poem.

Write a never look back poem.

Write a death poem. One of the more popular topics for poems is to write about the inevitable conclusion facing everyone—except for the immortals.

Write a deadline poem. Add a little pressure by giving yourself a deadline for finishing this poem.

Pick a city; make that the title of your poem; and then, write the poem.

Write a horror poem. Whether you're into the Universal monster movies or slasher flicks, horror is an often overlooked well of poetic

possibilities.

Write a temperature poem.

Write a self-portrait poem. It's time to take a good look in the mirror and poem what you see.

Pick a tool; make that the title of your poem; and then, write the poem.

Write a poem that is inspired by a piece of art. The piece of art could be a painting, a sculpture, a photograph, or something else that is defined as art. Describe the piece or use it to inspire something completely new.

Write a too much information poem. We live in a too much information culture, so this should be a slam dunk poem to write.

Write a history poem. There's ancient history, and then there's the history shared between two people—or the history of a single person, maybe even you.

Write a water poem. The planet is covered with water. Water falls from the skies in many different forms.

Write a lonely poem. Most people have felt lonely at some point in their lives. Channel that loneliness into a poem.

Write an origin poem. This poem can reveal the origin of a superhero, a thought, or an entire species.

Write a poem with the words: sassy, sinister, swing, and statistic.

Pick an animal; make that the title of your poem; and then, write the poem.

Write a poem about a landmark. The landmark could be a famous one (like Big Ben) or less obvious (like a rock that marks a long

driveway).

Write a clean poem.

Write a cento. A cento is a poem that uses the lines of other poets' poems—one line from each poet—to form an entirely new poem. Also called the cut-up technique.

Write a poem about a routine (or routines).

Write a poem about a memory. The memory can be a good one, a bad one, or one that is just plain confusing.

Pose a question in the title of your poem; then, answer the question with your poem.

Pick an object to write about in a poem. The object may have sentimental value, or it could be completely random.

Write a poem that incorporates a hobby. The poem could be about collecting stamps, fixing up cars, scrapbooking, etc.

Take the title of a poem you enjoy and re-work the title slightly; then, write a new poem.

Pick a color; make the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write a poem with an interaction of some sort. The interaction could be dialog, or it could involve something more physical or subtle.

Write a poem about something missing.

Write an angry poem. If it's been building up inside you, release it into a poem.

Write a rebirth poem. Rebirth can take many forms and be literal or metaphorical.

Write a work-related poem. Pick a job and write about it. Think of details from your own work history.

Write a poem of regret.

Write a poem with the words: banana, milkshake, tinsel, and hopscotch.

Pick an event; make that the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write a miscommunication poem. Everyone has been there and said something that was interpreted the wrong way.

Write a poem of longing. What do you long for? Love? Money? Chocolate?

Write a list poem. A list poem is pretty much what it sounds like. It's a poem that incorporates a list or multiple lists.

Write a farewell poem.

Write a weather poem. Weather can be a central piece of this poem, or it can play a supporting role.

Write a phobia poem. Most people have some phobia, whether it's a fear of heights, spiders, clowns, or the blank page.

Write a family connection poem. If you take a hard look at your family, you'll likely find a gold mine of poetry.

Write a commerce poem. Ka-ching!

Write an invasion poem. From ants to aliens, there are any number of real and imaginary invasions.

Write a vacation poem. Kick up your feet, break out the laptop, and poem away.

Write a poem involving a large crowd. The large crowd could be oblivious to each other (like in a busy city) or joined by a common purpose (like fleeing a city or a riot).

Write a poem for a specific audience. Instead of just writing a poem for yourself or any old audience, think of a specific audience. For instance, write a poem for people who love dogs.

Take the phrase “How to (blank);” replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write a marriage poem. Is it a good marriage? One with cracks in the foundation? Is it yours—or someone else’s?

Write a divorce poem.

Write a cascade poem. A cascade poem’s length is determined by the length of the first stanza. If the first stanza is three lines long, each stanza after is three lines long—and there will be four stanzas. The final line of each stanza after the first uses a line from the first stanza (in order). So the 3-line cascade poem would follow this pattern: ABC/abA/cdB/efC. Note: There is no rhyme scheme in this poem, though rhymes are allowed.

Write a rant poem. Let the words flow and flow and flow.

Write a poem about finding something. Find something physical like a special toy or pencil. Or find something else like the ability to empathize with others or fall in love.

Write a food poem. Some poets write entire collections of food poems.

Write a “what would make me happy” poem. In this poem, let the reader know what would make you happy.

Write a big change poem. The time for incremental changes is over. Write about volcanoes erupting or tornadoes rushing through a town. Or think of a big change that is not devastating but uplifting.

Write an autumn poem. Trees without leaves, cooling temperatures, and shorter days.

Write a rainy day poem.

Write a confrontation poem. The confrontation could be between people, animals, or something else.

Write a conspiracy theory poem. Many people don't buy into conspiracy theories, but what if…

Write a current events poem. Politics, sports, television, fashion—it's all current events. Tap into it.

Write a gardening poem. There are so many metaphors in gardening, but also any number of things can happen in or around the garden.

Write a time poem. Make the time, and then, write it.

Write a new poem. That is, write about something new in your poem.

Write a poem that incorporates signs. The signs can be physical signs like STOP and YIELD, or they can be spiritual or metaphorical signs.

Write a poem involving numbers.

Write a kyrielle. The kyrielle is a poem that consists of 8-syllable lines and quatrains (4-line stanzas). The final line of each stanza is a refrain. This poem can be rhymed or unrhymed and has no length limit.

Write a poem about banding together. When times get rough, a good group bands together.

Write a poem with the words: mayonnaise, yellow, cancer, and petroleum.

Describe a view in your poem. The view could be from your desk, from the top of a mountain, or anywhere else.

Write a poem about a neighborhood. Write about the people, the buildings, and the culture.

Write a dieting poem. Some diets are good; others, not so much.

Write a correspondence poem. The correspondence could be via e-mail, in a letter, by text message, etc.

Write a poem about something that doesn't belong. For instance, a baseball doesn't belong in a living room, especially if it came in through a closed window.

Write a character study poem.

Write an unexpected poem. Some poets may feel that all poems should be unexpected. That may be, but this poem tackles something unexpected as a subject.

Write a "beneath the surface" poem. There are the things we see on the surface, but what's going on beneath the surface?

Take a popular adage or saying and make that the title of your poem; then, write your poem.

Write a limerick. This is a light verse poetic form that has a standard rhyme scheme of aabba for the 5-line poem.

Use a magazine headline as the title of your poem; then, write your poem.

If you had a million dollars, how would it change your life? Write a poem about it.

Take the phrase “Nobody’s Worth (blank);” replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write a putting out fires poem.

Write a competitive poem. The poem could be about a sport or competing with co-workers in the workplace.

Write a telling the truth poem. Instead of hiding behind fictions, tell the truth in this poem.

Write a discovery poem.

Write a telling a lie poem. Don’t let on directly, but this poem should be filled with falsehoods.

Write a “what you’ve been through” poem. What kind of rough and tough times have you been through in your life?

Write a return poem. Everything that leaves must eventually return.

Write an echo poem. This poem may include refrains throughout.

Take the phrase “Better Safe Than (blank);” replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write a mistake poem. The poem itself might be a mistake, but this poem should investigate a mistake made by the poet or the subject of the poem.

Write a mislabeled poem.

Write a monotetra. The monotetra is a poem consisting of at least one quatrain (4-line stanza) with 8-syllable lines. The final line of each stanza repeats the same 4 syllables twice. Also, each stanza mono-rhymes, which means every line in the stanza rhymes with each other.

Write a starting over poem.

Take the phrase “I Think (blank);” replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write an overextended poem. Do you ever feel overextended in your own life? Write about it.

Write a bad poem. After so many great poems, this is your chance to finally write a bad one.

Write a climbing poem. The narrator could be climbing mountains, or the subject of the poem could be climbing on tables.

Write a traumatic poem.

Write a punch line poem. This poem should be like a joke with a build up and then a punch line. Or maybe the poem itself can be a series of punch lines without the jokes.

Write a poem with a twist. This poem would move in one direction for most of the poem and then have a twist at the end.

Take the phrase “(blank) Day;” replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write an overly dramatic poem.

Write a juxtaposition poem. There’s something powerful about putting two things together that don’t make sense at first sight.

Write a contrast poem. Contrast one thing against another.

Write a poem inspired by a movie. Use a quote from the movie to set up the poem if you wish.

Write a take no prisoners poem.

Write a poem about something you think about all the time. Bills? Deadlines? Food?

Write a poem that combines the best and worst of the past year.

Take the phrase “State of (blank);” replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write a backwards poem.

Write an inverted pyramid poem. Journalists use the inverted pyramid to put the most important information first and then scale down to the least important to allow editors to chop the bottom of the pieces to fit space requirements. Write your poem in this way.

Write a candy poem. Do you prefer sour, sweet, or tangy?

Write an obnoxious poem. Hopefully, you’re not obnoxious in person, but your poem is free to unleash the obnoxious.

Write a transformation poem. There are physical, mental, and spiritual transformations.

Take the phrase “Save the (blank);” replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write a poem that tells a story.

Write a kitchen poem. Your poem can take place in the kitchen or be about the kitchen.

Write a pirate poem. Aarrgghh…

Write a poem about why you started writing poetry.

Write a poem narrated by an inanimate object. Maybe your car has something to share about your driving or your computer has a recommendation or two.

Put yourself in someone else's skin and write a poem. Feel free to be anyone: Emily Dickinson, Darth Vader, or Godzilla.

Pick a monster; make it the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write a light bulb poem. This poem could also be called the "eureka!" poem—unless you really plan to write a poem about an actual light bulb.

Take the phrase "Ways to (blank);" replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write a poem that uses the following words: clodhopper, flash, camera, and satellite.

Write a poem that incorporates three things you can see from where you are currently sitting. Feel free to use this prompt from multiple locations.

Write a poem about being stuck somewhere.

Take the phrase "The Meaning of (blank);" replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write the poem.

Write a confined spaces poem. The poem could take place in a box, an elevator, an air duct, etc.

Write an after the rain poem. Is there devastation or beauty?

Write a cold poem.

Write a shopping poem. Grocery shopping. Black Friday shopping. Shopping for a car—or a new spouse.

Write an "as I was saying" poem. Start off with the phrase "as I was saying," and then, share whatever it is you were saying.

Write a service poem. There are many types of service available as subject matter—from volunteer service to auto service.

Take the phrase "Whatever (blank);" replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Respond to the statement: "I'm going to set the world on fire."

Write a future poem. That is, your poem looks at your imagined future.

Write a poem about a profession. Teachers. Doctors. Radio show hosts.

Write a cycle poem. The poem could itself be cyclical, or it could investigate cycles. Heck, it could even be about motorcycles or bicycles.

Write a haiku poem. Haiku consist of three short lines. Some write with 5 syllables in the first line, 7 in the second line, and 5 in the third line. However, many contemporary haiku poets just keep the lines short, focus on nature, and use a cutting word.

Write a hopeless poem. Who hasn't been in a hopeless situation? Think back and write about one.

Write an upside-down poem.

Write an “other side of the fence” poem. Is the grass always greener on the other side?

Pick a word; make the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write a changes poem. What kind of changes does your narrator or subject go through?

Pick a group of people; make the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write a receipt poem. This could be a poem about what’s owed to the narrator, or it could be a poem that fits on the back of a receipt.

Write a poem about something you dread.

Write a last chance poem. The narrator could be facing a last chance or offering a last chance.

Write an eavesdropping poem. Eavesdrop on people in public (or imagine you are doing so) and share the dirt in a poem.

Write a poem with the words: blank, zebra, fizzle, and stoop.

Write a trapped poem.

Write a belief poem. Many poems share beliefs.

Write a “one of these days” poem. The narrator of this poem should start with the phrase “one of these days” and then share what’s going to happen—or not happen.

Write an isolation poem. This poem could be in a basement, on a deserted island, in an office cubicle, etc.

Pick the title of any song; make it the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Take the phrase “Better Off (blank);” replace the blank with a word or phrase; make the new phrase the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write a “turn around” poem.

Pick a veggie; make the veggie the title of your poem; and then, write your poem.

Write a poem with the words: eagle, flag, snake, and hurricane.

Write a tanka. Japanese form that consists of five lines with the following number of syllables per line: 5/7/5/7/7. As might be expected with the extra syllables, tanka are a little more casual than haiku.

Write a surreal poem. Think Salvador Dali.

Write a spooky poem. Spooky is just a notch below horror.

Pick a creature that lives primarily in water and incorporate it into your poem. The creature could be real (like a shark) or imaginary (like Nessie).

Write a fortune cookie poem. This poem should be as short and funny or profound as the wisdom found on a fortune cookie.

Write a remix poem. Take a poem (yours or someone else’s) and remix it the same as a DJ would remix a song.

Write an out of this world poem. This poem could take place in outer space, but it could also just be extremely over the top.

Write an “everything is against you” poem. Hopefully, you don’t really think everything is against you, but for this poem, imagine that it is.

Write a family tree poem. Look at your family tree and shake it.

Write a fib. The fib is a poetic form that follows the Fibonacci sequence (and was brought to fame by Gregory K. Pincus). So the syllables per line follows this pattern: 1/1/2/3/5/8/13/21…to infinity. Some fibs go up and down following the sequence (example: 1/1/2/3/5/8/13/8/5/3/2/1/1).

Write an escape poem.

Write an empty poem. This poem could be empty of prepositions, adjectives, feeling, etc.

Write a winter poem. Snow, cold, bundling up, and fireplaces.

Write a magical poem. There’s Harry Potter magic, the magic inside you, and hocus pocus magic.

Write a superficial poem. Like totally superficial, you know?

Write a poem about a particular sound. Pick a sound. Metal against metal? An alarm clock? A nagging voice? Then, write about it.

Write an industrial poem. This poem could take place at a car factory or address industry in general.

Write an environmental poem. This poem could talk about how things are faring for the environment on a large scale, or it could look at a specific small scale in which the environment comes into play.

Write a poem about how things change. Because they always do.

Write a poem for children. Make it silly, make it rhyme.

Write a telling it like it is poem. Don’t hold back; tell it like it is.

Write a “when you’re not paying attention” poem. What happens when you’re not paying attention.

Write a gone fishing poem. If you’ve made it through all these prompts, then you deserve a little break. Grab a pole and a nice shady spot.

WRITE POETRY NOW. Copyright © 2011 by Writer's Digest Books. Manufactured in the United States of America. All rights reserved. No other part of this e-book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means including information storage and retrieval systems without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer, who may quote brief passages in a review. Published by Writer's Digest Books, an imprint of F+W Media, Inc., 10150 Carver Road, Blue Ash, Ohio 45242. (800) 289-0963. First edition.

For more resources for writers, visit www.writersdigest.com/books.

To receive a free weekly e-mail newsletter delivering tips and updates about writing and about Writer's Digest products, register directly at www.writersdigest.com/enews.

15 14 13 12 11 5 4 3 2 1

Edited by: Robert Brewer

Cover designed by: Rachael Smith